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## Mrs. Cornelius Stevenson

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### In Memoriam

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OF THE events of the past year nothing has so intimately affected the life of the Museum as the loss of Mrs. Cornelius Stevenson, our curator, member of the Associate Committee of Women and of the Museum Committee.

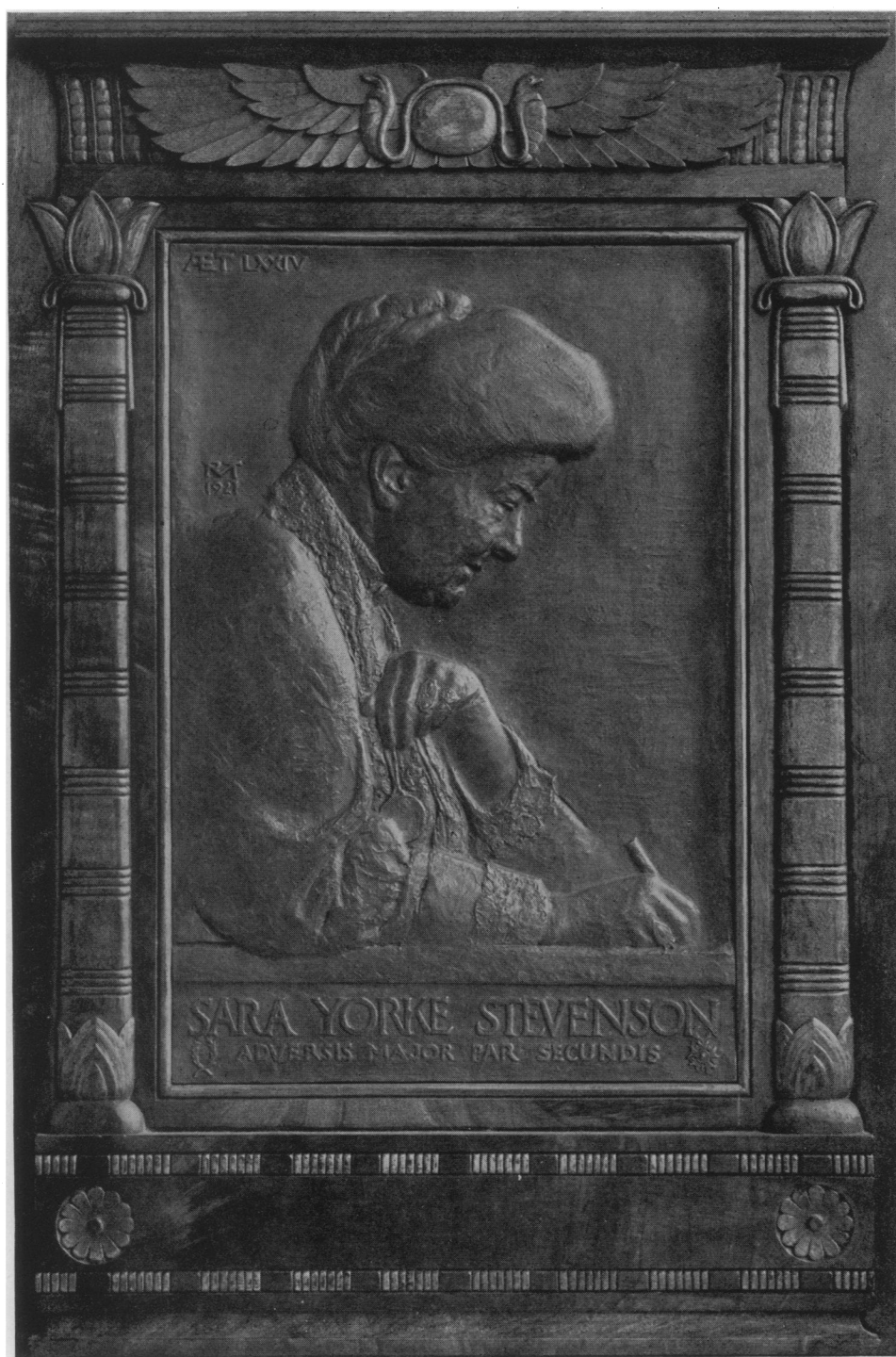
That Philadelphia has lost its most distinguished woman was obvious by the spontaneous expression of public and of private grief which appeared immediately on her death.

Countless groups in the community consider themselves the special and intimate losers by her death, and this is the test of the breadth of her sympathy and the depth to which her roots had struck down in the rich soil of Philadelphia.

This Museum is one of those particular groups which considers the loss personal to itself. It could not be otherwise. In the letters to the public press which have appeared about Mrs. Stevenson, she has been shown in full panoply in the uniform of the Emergency Aid, with her medals of honor, or in the dress of a woman of society prominent on the social pages of the daily press, or as the indefatigable writer of a newspaper column which from the first days of the European war was handed over heartily to the public service of the Allied cause. But to the staff of this Museum, and to a certain degree to the Committee and those interested, she was another figure.

To us there will always rise, at the mention of Mrs. Stevenson's name, the dignified little figure with the black bag out of which she brought, like the unexpected mother in the Swiss Family Robinson, precisely the thing needed at the moment. For wise counsel, for tolerance, for understanding sympathy, we all of us came to her and never were refused. Her counsel was based on an experience of the world which included half a century of real intimacy with brilliant and wise people who sought her as a companion; it was poignant with interludes of the Mexican capital, Parisian days and Egyptian excavations. It was invariably moral and direct, but tempered with a worldliness that was never the counsel of the fear of consequences.

Her tolerance, while it seemed almost universal, balked at glossing over a sham or condoning insincerity. If she did not always



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suffer fools gladly she was generally able to contrive some amusement from them and to shorten their discourse by a quick turn of wit.

It is a rare thing in an institution like a public museum that such a figure appears and is allowed full scope of its intimate personality. For this reason we count it particularly fortunate that the staff of Memorial Hall was so restricted, and its activities not yet too diversified for Mrs. Stevenson's imprint to have been set firmly on us all.

It would be natural to speak of her scholarship in various fields, especially that of Egyptology. When she began she was almost the only woman in the field, and she pursued it with all her natural enthusiasm and understanding. That her other activities made it impossible for her to keep up with modern scientific work is perhaps of no great loss. There will always be characters less rich, and imaginations less sure which can be entrusted with the work of forwarding the world's knowledge. Her great value was not actual scientific achievement (she would understand how reverently and affectionately this is said), but her rare possession of the truly scientific point of view. In this she ranked ahead of many of the most famous specialists of our time and the equal of only a few others. This quality was, of course, partly native with her, but it is interesting to note that it was in some part the direct transmission from Agassiz, who was in some ways the greatest mind in America during his life time. The famous pupils of Agassiz immediately spring to mind when one thinks of Mrs. Stevenson and one of them, Professor Putnam, was, as she called him, her father in science. It was from him, in her impressionable years, that she received the legacy of breadth of vision and immediate application of any new fact to the only proper study of mankind—which is Man. Our new generation of laboratory scholars and daring propounders of new ideas can never be sufficiently praised; but too often they lack the agility of understanding, the instant clapping down of a fact on its corresponding human use, which characterized the little old lady who longed so to be included in their ranks and who read their reports so untiringly in the small and sleepless hours of the morning. It is for this quality of mind, this youthful and unashamed curiosity, that we should celebrate her name as a true scientist and one of rare attainment.

It would be disloyal to the last degree to that gallant spirit to wish that she had not died. For a year we felt in the presence of one whose days were numbered and there can be no doubt that she also knew this and faced it with keen interest and a minimum of human dread. It is, therefore, our pleasant task enthusiastically to report to the friends of the Museum that Sara York Stevenson has been living among us and to draw attention to what it has meant to us.

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